

Community Services and Recreation

DRAFT MINUTES/APPROVED

To: Community Services Commission Members

From: Gerardo Sorkin, Director

Re: Commission Meeting April 7, 2009

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Laurie Jean Hannon at 5:33 p.m.

I. Attendance:

Present: Walter Heinig, Judith Meyers, Maggie Jensen, Judith McKay, Laurie-Jean Hannon, Donna Malley

Staff: Gerardo Sorkin, Director, Nancy Leddy, Youth Services Administrator and Carla Pelliccio, Secretary

Absent: Thomas Balga, William Carey, Michael Compare

II. Acceptance of Minutes:

Donna Malley made a motion to accept the Minutes of March 3, 2009, seconded by Judith McKay.

III. Correspondence:

None to report.

IV. Director's Report:

Mr. Sorkin thanked the new commissioners for meeting with him before the meeting to give them a tour of the Community Services office, introducing staff and providing an overview of services that are provided.

Report by Nancy Leddy, Youth Services Bureau

Ms. Leddy welcomed the new commissioners and began by stating her role as the Youth Services Bureau, which usually indicates more than one individual, however her role operates as a single person with the support of Community Services staff.

*Project Graduation* – North Haven High School's 22<sup>nd</sup> annual event will take place on graduation night, June 23, 2009 at Quassy Amusement Park in Middlebury, CT. Last year was the first year that Project Graduation took place at this location (previously held at Sunrise Resort in Moodus, CT). The evening will begin with an all-American barbecue at the theme park. There will be twelve rides in operation, full use of the arcade at no additional cost to the students, a magician, palm reader, and hypnotist, as well as a DJ. Two possible adjustments for this year: a.) In meeting with students last week, reviews indicated that they would like to replace the magician with an improvisational activity, similar to the Drew Carey show, "Who's Line is it Anyway?" Ms. Leddy is currently looking into the answer for the students.

b.) adjustment in the time that the hypnotist performs . Project Graduation is available for any North Haven High School senior who will be walking at graduation. The cost for each student is a \$5.00, and they are welcome to bring one guest for \$25.00.

Regarding fund raising efforts, Ms. Leddy has received a verbal commitment from Connex Credit Union for a \$5,000 donation. Ms. Leddy and Mr. Sorkin will be meeting with Connex on Thursday to discuss their plan for this year. In addition, Youth Services partnered with North Haven Academy, the Paul Mitchell school who produced a fashion show on March 11<sup>th</sup> at North Haven High School, which raised \$2,000. An additional \$350 was raised this past Friday at Mr. North Haven, as Youth Services sponsored a concession stand. In continued efforts to raise further donations, letters will be sent to senior class parents and local businesses. Additional funds will be utilized to subsidize Project Graduation through a small grant.

Mr. Sorkin emphasized that the efforts of Project Graduation is to mitigate the negative consequences associated with alcohol and drug abuse. This fun-filled night proves to graduating seniors that fun can be had simply among good friends, good food and a great environment with fun activities. This annual event is made possible through the coordination of efforts with North Haven PTSA.

When asked by Ms. Jensen how all students are monitored during the event at Quassy, Ms. Leddy informed them of the various chaperones who attend (last year ratio was 23 chaperones to 180 students) and welcomed any of the commissioners to consider doing so for this fun-filled evening. The only stipulation is that any parents of a graduating seniors are not eligible to attend.

*The Substance Abuse Prevention Council-* Ms. Leddy is the Chair for this interdepartmental group whose focus who plans activities for prevention. Various prevention brochures were distributed to the commissioners. Ms. Leddy also reviewed the success of the Community-wide Forum that took place in February in partnership between the Council, the Youth Services Bureau, the Fire and Police Departments and North Haven PTSA. The Presentation began with short video clip (from ABC Nightlife) discussing the increase in the misuse of prescription drugs in which they highlighted 2 families, one of which was from CT. Immediately following the video was a presentation by the North Haven Parent who was highlighted in the piece. Two medical personnel presented on heroin and oxycontin, the Police discussed the legal ramifications behind drug use, Community Services Counselor Jennifer Gosselin conducted a counseling piece. Finally a question and answer session was facilitated by Chief Landisio and drug literature and brochures were distributed. An estimated 350-500 attendees were present.

Building off the momentum, a second presentation of the parent piece of the Community Forum will take place at 7 pm on April 29, 2009 in the gymnasium of the Recreation Center. The parent will present again as well as now include a presentation from her daughter who will speak about addiction and recovery, and being sober for one year. Ms. Leddy has submitted a press release regarding this event to run in all of the local media.

Ms. Meyers asked what the extent of the problem is in North Haven. Mr. Sorkin stated that the problem is significant and this initiative was made in response to the the approximately 20 individuals who were involved in the robberies in order to support their drug habit with heroin or oxycontin.

Ms. Leddy is also currently working with Walter Mann of NHTV to produce a 30-second public service announcements to be shown on media outlets such as NHTV and the North Haven High School channel.

Mr. Heinig asked if there is any momentum to educate incoming middle or high school parents. Ms. Leddy responded that there is currently a work in progress in which the 10<sup>th</sup> grade class will have the opportunity to speak with older students who have suffered from a drug addiction. The hope is to have this presentation take place during prom week. Secondly the Council is currently trying to create a parent presentation for freshman student orientation at the high school in August. Ms. McKay asked if more

students could be reached in addition to the 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and Ms. Leddy responded that since all 10<sup>th</sup> graders have Health class, the school feels that this is the best forum that all students can be reached.

SAPC meetings take place during the last Wednesday of every month at 2:15pm in the Principal's Conference Room at the high school.

*Workforce Alliance-* This is a grant that Ms. Leddy and Nancy Ceballos, Transition Specialist at North Haven High School, applied for last year in order to employ students with special needs during the summer months. The leftover funds were rolled over into a grant in which they were able to pay students enrolled in transition classes when going out into the community to perform jobs. They currently have 12 students who receive stipends, and also have funds to employ student after the school day concludes. An issue currently being faced by local employers who were originally willing to take on students at their work site is that they cannot take on student employees under the current economic conditions. A conflict exists as employers are letting people go, and although students would not be receiving money in exchange for employment, they cannot take on student employees. Thus the progress in securing additional after school work sites for students has not been successful as they had hoped. Earlier that afternoon, Ms. Leddy attended a business expo in which she approached local businesses to discuss the possibility establishing student work sites, to which many of the conversation were quite positive. Forget Me Not Florist, North Haven Housing Authority, Gateway Community College are among three new sites that have recently been established.

Through the Workforce Alliance grant, special needs students who work twice a week earn \$15; those who work four times a week earn \$30. Bus transportation is provided through the grant as well. All other students working earn minimum wage of \$8.00/hr. Mr. Sorkin asked the commissioners if they are involved in any businesses or know of any of whom are looking to recruit, please let him know, as several special needs students are still in need of being placed. There is no cost to the employer. Businesses are not limited to North Haven, however students who wish to work after school, they must secure their own transportation to their work site

#### Daycare:

*Enrollment:* Preschool – all slots are filled/ 15 children; School Age – all slots are filled/ 30 children; currently have a waiting list.

*Activity:* Read Across America celebration took place at various North Haven schools in honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday.

*Staff training/development:* Staff have noticed recently the emergence of certain challenging behaviors at early ages, and staff will be attending a free training in order to be prepared how to respond to these behaviors, and will continue to look for additional trainings to enhance the staff's knowledge.

A new health consultant, Nancy Sanka, from Visiting Nurse Services, has been brought on board as required compliance with the State of CT Department of Health, in order to review charts and provide tips to the staff as to how to improve notes documentation.

#### Senior Center:

*Activities:* Copies of the April 2009 *Senior Happenings* brochure of activities and events were distributed to each Commission member. Copies of the *Senior Resource Guide* published by the Quinnipiac Chamber of Commerce were also distributed.

Mr. Sorkin attended the regularly scheduled monthly open forum discussions with the seniors today. As previously noted, this open discussion takes place among the seniors, on the first Tuesday, between

12:45pm - 1:15pm, monthly. This forum will allow the seniors to offer comments, suggestions and ask any questions they may have. The general topic this month continued to surround the renovation plans and the temporary move to the American Legion during the construction. The move is tentatively scheduled to begin during the first week of May. All transitional measures are currently being handled.

*Senior Center Renovation and expansion Plans:* The pre-bid conference/ walk through and bidding for the grant took place. Ms. Hannon asked for assurance that the majority of the grant money will be spent on the build, and that the construction will not be short changed, in an attempt to save money for another use. Mr. Sorkin assured her that the goal is that they receive the best product at the lowest price. He also ensured that the grant is intended only for the Senior Center. Ms. Jensen asked if the builder has been selected, to which Mr. Sorkin stated that he did not believe that a contract had in fact been signed yet. To answer the next question posed by Ms. Jensen which was who makes the decision of contractor, Mr. Sorkin quickly reviewed the bidding process. Approximately 30 companies bid on the job.

Following up on last month's report, Ms. Hannon asked if the Senior Center garage got knocked down. Mr. Sorkin responded that it had through Public Works, which allowed funds to be saved to be utilized on other areas of the project. Ms. Hannon asked for clarification as to who is going to do the job, the company who gets the winning bid or Public Works? Mr. Sorkin replied that it was going to be the winning company and that Public Works was not going to do any part of the renovation work. Mr. Sorkin provided the name of the architect, David Holmes upon the inquiry of Ms. Jensen. Ms. Hannon stated that a few people had asked her (after the Senior Center garage had already been torn down) whether the individuals in Public Works were licensed for that type of demolition. Mr. Sorkin's understanding was that all personnel were in good standing to complete the job, but will make certain and follow up with the commission at the next meeting. Ms. Hannon concluded by stating that she wants to ensure that moving forward all of the proper individuals are completing the work. Mr. Heinig then asked who handles the contract administration. Mr. Sorkin stated that it is handled by the Finance office in partnership with consultants, Wagner Associates, who have been involved in many projects. This consulting group has been involved in the pre-bid and bidding process, the review of the architectural plans and what is considered permissible under the conditions of the grant, and ultimately will be responsible for monitoring finances throughout this process.

Ms. Malley asked if plans were available for review, and Mr. Sorkin mentioned that the plans had been presented to all commissioners previous to her serving on the commission, however indicated that Manager of Senior Center, Judith Amarone will be speaking to the commission at the next meeting. He will ensure that she address any questions related to the renovation and provide a progress update.

### Counseling:

*Waiting list:* currently have a 1-2 week waiting list. Appointments being scheduled as inquiry calls are triaged.

*Documentation updates:* focusing much of the efforts in the transition and implementation of the Electronic Medical Records (EMR). The vendor of this web-based system is *Carepaths*. Business associate contracts have been signed to ensure to comply with all privacy regulations. Currently setting up templates to be used in clinical charts.

*Personnel:* Currently operating at full staff.

## Community Services:

*Monthly Food Bank Statistics for April 2009:* 342 meals were distributed in the month of April, 2009. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Sorkin gave the new commissioners a tour of the food pantry area, located on the ground floor of the Annex Building. Currently moving from issuing pre-assembled bags of food to a “client choice” model.

*Toy Bank:* Determination has been made to open the toy bank (now available year round) for parents to select items for their children's birthdays. This toy bank, previously only available during the holiday season, is now a resource to parents for year-round gift giving needs, as many toys remain from the past holiday seasons. Any North Haven parent who has financial needs can access the toy bank. A short application must be completed in which a parent must give a statement of need. Proof of income is not required, however we ask that parents fall within the income guidelines (60% of the state median income level). A “client choice” model will be followed here as well. The toy room is currently being organized and a press release will be sent to the local media this coming week. Copies of the press release and toy bank application were distributed to all commissioners. After reviewing the press release and getting clarification on type of toys accepted, Ms. Hannon made the recommendation that the statement, “donations to the toy bank are always welcome,” say “donations of NEW TOYS are always welcome.”

*Application for Assistance:* In response to the commission’s request to see a copy of the application for assistance, Mr. Sorkin provided copies for review and discussed the application process.

*Recreation Brochure:* Copies of the Summer 2009 brochure of activities and events were distributed to each Commission member.

## V. Finance Report:

*Daycare:* The month by month expenditures snapshot of the Daycare grant was provided (through February 2009), in addition to the 2008 Annual Report. Mr. Sorkin pointed out that the Daycare is not self-sustaining and is subsidized by the town.

The February 2009 budget reports were reviewed by the Commission (report ending February 28, 2009).

*Community Services :* Current snapshot of Community Services expenditures:

February 2009: bottom line under budget = 57.4%

*Welfare:* Current snapshot of Welfare expenditures (eviction related expenses) were distributed and reviewed.

February 2009: bottom line under budget= 64.9%

*Senior Center:* Current snapshot of Senior Center expenditures were distributed and reviewed.

February 2009: bottom line relatively on target= 57.2%

*Special Funds :* The monthly snapshot of the Special Funds were reviewed by the Commission. Of the various funds reviewed on this snapshot, the two highlighted were the two largest funds, the Emergency Fund and the Outreach Fund, as well as the Project Graduation Fund.

*Emergency Fund:* February 2009: \$44,704.25 exists in the fund

*Outreach Fund:* February 2009: \$24,378.74 exists in the fund. \$1,224 went towards the sponsorship of the annual PTSA 5K Road Race (purchased 200 T-shirts for participants)

*Project Graduation: February 2009: \$27,633.49 exists in the fund*

Mr. Heinig asked for clarification of the use of the Emergency fund, and Mr. Sorkin explained that this is primarily for emergency fuel needs of resident. He went on to add that through the proactive approach that Community Services has made to ensure that residents energy assistance applications were processed appropriately, the occurrences of emergencies has been reduced. And once the State funds have been utilized by the resident, the Emergency fund will be available as a last resort to assist.

Ms. Meyers asked Mr. Sorkin if the Commission plays a role in the formulation of the budget, and if so, when does this happen. Mr. Sorkin stated the Commission had not played a role for the 2009-2010 budget, however feels that perhaps they can play a role as advisory board for next year's budget planning.

Ms. Hannon felt that Ms. Meyers brought up a great point and suggested that Mr. Sorkin present the budget ideas to the commission prior to meeting with the Board of Finance. She then asked if there were any significant additions requested in the new budget. Mr. Sorkin did not feel there were any significant requests, other than moving the Senior Center budget to its own accounting line, rather than sharing many of the costs with Community Services. This will give a more accurate representation of the expenses incurred. The second request that was made was to increase the staff training and development line by 50%. Mr. Sorkin feels that ongoing staff development is one area that needs to be invested in. Mr. Sorkin mentioned that the budget proposal was brought to the Board of Finance in January 2009, and the budget proposal is currently posted on the town website if they wish to review it.

#### VI. Old Business:

None to discuss.

#### VII. New Business:

In an effort to conserve paper, Ms. Hannon asked the commissioners if they would prefer that meeting agendas, minutes, etc. are emailed to them prior to the meeting. Ms. Pelliccio will then ensure to have a couple of copies of these items present at the meeting. Additionally, it was decided that meeting reminders will be conducted via email, rather than phone calls, in an attempt to streamline the process and save time.

In response to the request from last meeting, copies of all commissioner's contact information was provided to each commissioner. Ms. Pelliccio asked that each commissioner review their contact information and confirm that their information, including email addresses were accurate.

#### VIII. Public Participation:

No public was in participation.

#### IX. Adjournment:

Laurie Jean Hannon asked for a Motion to Adjourn accepted by Judith McKay, seconded by Walter Heinig. The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.